

Start Here, Together by orphan_account

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Genre: Love Confessions, M/M, Senior Year of High School, its literally just about columbia university im so sorry, mike is on the hockey team and will does yearbook :D

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Summary:

"So it kind of bothers Will that he's still hung up on the childhood love of his best friend, because as he wants to leave Hawkins behind, he knows he'll have to let go of that crush, too. It's the last six months of high school and Will is driving Jonathan's old car to the Wheeler's house to tell Mike that he's been in love. Will is mature now, and mostly he just wants to do it to purge everything he had felt for so long. Maybe, he thought, it would make everything just a little easier from now on, and maybe it would help to relieve those feelings. He doesn't want to be stuck with Mike - a memory of his childhood to teenage years in his brain as he's going to go far away for the rest of his life."

Start Here, Together

Author's Note:

dedication to kokaki for her amazing editing

LemonTea - Today at 12:28 PM

did mike kiss will

did will kiss mike

gasps did they kiss someone else and have a short
dting period where they therein realise they truly
belong to mike or will...

blythe - Today at 12:29 PM

literally both of this

all of this

LemonTea - Today at 12:29 PM

POETIC CINEMA

is nonsensical and very messy but i had so much fun
writing, so thoughts on a sequel would be helpful
because now i am highly invested in this SMH

It wasn't that Will was outgrowing his friends. He was just busy, much more busy than he thought he'd be as a senior. Back in ninth and tenth grade, his weekends would be spent with the party playing D&D or at the arcade, skating rink, movie theatre. Now he was on yearbook committee, taking over Art classes, and working at the general store in replacement of Jonathan far away in NYU. And soon he could be closer to Jonathan than he thought, if he got accepted to Columbia University. He had got a lot on his plate these days, and he couldn't help that he'd been spacing out from his friends over the past year and a half.

He didn't mean to or anything. Now he sees more of the party in his classes or in the halls, but it's been a long time since he's been with them as a unit, as the party. He's also seen less of Mike. Interestingly enough, Will has no idea how he's managed to drift away from him, but he did. Yet even with Will 'drifting' a little, Mike was still a major dilemma as ever.

Will had three classes with him, an outrageous amount for being in his senior year, too, and it deterred him from ever letting go of that childhood crush that had never really tapered off over the years. Perhaps it was the thing that made him push away from him more and more as well. But even Mike was doing his own things, Robotics Club and Math Competition Club and Will had even heard he was on the hockey team now. Which Will would kill for to see him play, and he's been meaning to find out about the times and locations of games, but... he just can't bring himself to.

He's thankful that things are the way they are, though. In this way, Mike's never found out. Nobody else has found out. He's fairly sure his mom knows, and a while ago he used to think that Nancy and Jonathan knew, but it's not a problem anymore. They're away, and soon so will be Mike and Will. Off to separate states for college - Will's first choice being in New York, and Mike's Virginia Tech.

Will knows that the remainder of the party is spreading out, too. Lucas wants to go to Cornell and Dustin wants to head all the way to Boston for school. Max wants to head back to California for school, and El wants to go out, go bigger, go to the University of British Columbia in Vancouver. But even the rest of the party is more intact in expanding than Will is with the rest of its members. And they had all kind of let him leave anyways.

So it kind of bothers Will that he's still hung up on the childhood love of his best friend, because as he wants to leave Hawkins behind, he knows he'll have to let go of that *crush*, too. It's the last six months of high school and Will is driving Jonathan's old car to the Wheeler's house to tell Mike that he's been in love. Will is mature now, and mostly he just wants to do it to purge everything he had felt for so long. Maybe, he thought, it would make everything just a little easier from now on, and maybe it would help to relieve those feelings. He doesn't want to be stuck with Mike - a memory of his childhood to teenage years in his brain as he's going to go far away for the rest of his life.

It would be stupid, he realizes, as he takes away his hand from the steering wheel and wipes it on his jeans. The worst case scenario was that Mike would ostracize him, which somehow Will still found unlikely, and the best case scenario was that they would stay friends

and nothing more, that basically nothing would change - which Will not only expected as the best case scenario but also hoped for, despite his outlandish fantasies throughout the years of getting together with his trope of a childhood crush. And he didn't have to worry about that anyway. Mike wasn't even gay - he'd been dating Will's telekinetic sister (Joyce and Hopper had finally gotten married last year, not a big wedding, but a tight relationship that would involve a strong bonding of their respective children - so Will and El were finally siblings) since they were thirteen. Will had long since given up after he'd learned to stop overtly pining by the end of freshman year, when their older siblings were still around to notice.

Winding in the calculated thoughts of Mike's possible responses, rehearsing his words in his brain, he finds the cul-de-sac ahead to close in on him. He does a shoddy job of parking in the driveway; with a steadied breath he steps out, the driveway light overhead shining down on him, and tracks his way to the door and gives it two brisk raps.

Thankfully, it's Mike that comes out a minute later, and the sight of his bygone best friend at his doorstep must make him rattle with a little surprise. He breaks into a smile, gives Will a quick greeting before gripping his shoulders and pulling him into a hug.

Will's heart accelerates and his breath catches when Mike's long arms wrap around his back. Mike is tall now, at least a head taller, and Will had noticed over the years that he'd filled in a little more, so it doesn't surprise him that he's heard so many good things about Mike on the hockey team. If he breathes in, he can smell the unnervingly close scent of the baby powder Mike put on that Will had liked so much. Mike had started wearing it in the summer of tenth grade and it drove Will absolutely crazy.

He wriggles out of Mike's arms, hoping his friend didn't hear the explosive sound of heart palpitations erupting from his chest. The last thing he needed now was to have Mike know before he needed to, and Will wasn't ready yet, not until he had all of the appropriate gravitas from him.

"Did you come to look over some photos?" Mike asks him when he pulls away, excited and in a rush. Will's eyebrows furrow in

confusion before he remembers Mike must be talking about his devotion to yearbook committee that had apparently become so patently distinctive when it came to Will being in the party. "Honestly, I don't think I'm the best person to ask if you need help with that kind of stuff," Mike chuckles, babbling on and on. "You'd be better off calling, you know, Jonathan, right? He was on yearbook when he was a senior." He drums his fingers against the side of the door, while Will stands a little stiff, just a few feet away from him now.

"Oh, no - sorry. It's not about the yearbook." Idly he is once more met with the notion that if things didn't go well after this, then Will actually wouldn't be able to discuss yearbook photos with Mike at all, or discuss anything with him again. "I just came here to talk to you." He looks sheepishly at his feet instead, hoping at the very least his obscured face couldn't give away any scope of the conversation that would follow.

Mike's face shifts with an indiscernible expression, but what falls out of his mouth is an impassive "oh", scratchy with a voice crack. "Okay. Well, do you want to come in?" Will glances at the peek of yellow light emitting from the opening hallway of the Wheeler's house. He knows it's warmer in there than it is out on the porch, but he regards the high possibility of the malfunctions of his idea he'd been mulling over for weeks. If he was rejected, to be torn apart, and dismissed from Mike or the party, he would not be able to preserve any sort of pride or dignity if he had to cross outside of Mike's house.

His pending anxiety reminds him about the worst case scenario (*unlikely*, Will had thought, but now that he was here - how unlikely?) that had rolled through his mind one too many times of Mike quite literally slamming the door in his face if he confessed his long-term crush out here in the porch, which would strip away more dignity than turning and running would - so he accepts and Mike follows him indoors.

They scurry down to the basement, ignoring the missing signals; the lack of Holly's familiar babbling or the muffled noises of television near his father draped over the living room's fauteuil. The only sound is the little rustling of wind shielded by the thick windows and the light patter of footsteps down the stairs, and a little pang touches

Will's heart as he recalls that he hasn't been here in so long.

"I wanted to talk to you too," Mike says, almost instantly after they pass the entrance of the room. Will stands, unmoving as Mike slips to the sofa. "I'm really glad you came over. I have a lot of stuff to tell you that we haven't had time to. I wanted to talk to you about, you know, after high school." He kicks his feet up on the outside arm of the couch.

"We talk about after high school all the time," Will points out for him. At lunch and at breaks, with college counselors, after school and before school, adult life was the subject of Hawkins seniors; that rang true for the rest of the party who had stuck to each other since the start of high school, so the rapid development of expanding into *adulthood* was just as much novel and liberating as it was frightening and fearsome in its foreign way.

Mike impatiently shifts in his seat, the cushion poking out from spaces where his back and legs aren't pressed into. "I wanted to talk to you about college," he clarifies.

"You're applying to Virginia Tech, Notre Dame, Michigan State and Brown," Will automatically replies. "I know." He's panicky and he's not sure why, because he came knowing they'd be applying to different schools, which fuelled his confidence in this confession. He hoped it'd bring some kind of absolution of the feelings for his best friend that had stirred him since the seventh grade.

Mike's eyes twinkle. Will sits across from the couch on a beanbag. "I didn't know you've been memorizing that. That's thoughtful," Mike says amusedly. "You can expand the list now."

Will gives him a blank look. "What?"

"El came over a few weeks ago," Mike announces, and Will has to stop himself from rolling his eyes. Of course she did, but he has no reason to be surprised or hurt. He came over tonight with preparation of more of his dignity to be lost, because El and Mike were still dating in senior year. Which should have made the idea of confessing harder, but... it didn't. It actually made things seem easier. "I know you've been really busy, but we didn't want to tell you. I guess it's

stupid because the year is ending soon, but, you know.” Mike gives him a lopsided smile that only furthers Will’s confusion.

His eyebrows fold together. “What is it? What do you mean?”

“We talked to the rest of the party a while ago and decided that we’re all applying to Hawkins University,” Mike says excitedly. “I thought you’d want in. It’s just in case, or something. And if we all get in, we’re going to put our acceptance papers together and make a collage out of it. It was Lucas’ idea.”

“Oh,” Will says. He expected... something *more* than that for some reason, and he considers ditching his big confessional now because it’s too intense compared to Mike’s little proposal. “I’m in,” he says all the same. “I don’t - uh, I’m not going to go to Hawkins, though,” he adds lamely, turns over in the beanbag.

“I know,” Mike replies. “None of us are going, we don’t think. I already know you want to go to Columbia. We’re not gonna make you go to Hawkins,” he laughs. “Which is why I wanted to tell you I’m also applying. So you can expand the list.”

Will can practically feel his eyes popping out from his head. “What? You’re applying to Columbia?” he babbles, sitting up. “Why?”

“Because I want to follow you there. I told Dustin and Lucas and they’re gonna apply with me, too. But they don’t want to go as much as I do. I want to keep in touch with you, I don’t just want to lose you forever.” His eyes change to turn meaningful, and Will feels everything hit him at once. Mike wanted to follow him to college?

For what? his mind screams. As he tries to make sense of... *that*, whatever Mike had just said, Mike then blurts, “You know, it was about two months ago that El and I broke up. We decided later in the same day when we decided to all apply to Hawkins of Indiana.”

This is an overwhelming amount of information. Will’s head snaps forward. “You *what*, you *what* - you *what*?” He doesn’t know where to even begin with so much information. “Why didn’t you tell me all of this when it happened? Why are you telling me this now? Did everyone else know you broke up, and...”

He trails off, with so, so many more statements in his head he's vacillating between. He's already backtracking on his confession - the whole reason why he's here at all, and soon could be backtracking up from the basement and out the door.

Why hadn't Will picked up on El and Mike breaking up? He hasn't exactly been surveilling Mike's every movement, but watching him well enough from where he's seen him, and it's only now that he realizes he hasn't seen El by his locker very much anymore or Mike coming over to the Byers house when El was staying over.

Something sinks deep in Will's stomach, but he's not sure what it is or why.

"You've been really busy," Mike says simply. "You don't come over anymore. Max and El seem to be the only ones who actually know where you are anymore."

Will grimaces because he knows it's true. "I'm sorry," he manages, shaking his head, but Mike only gives him a light smile and throws his legs out from the couch to sit upright.

"You've been so busy these days and it's interesting. I was kind of worried that you'd be sheltered when we hit high school but you found all these things to do, and..." What goes unsaid is how he didn't expect Will to get so busy that he would drift away from all his friends for a year and a half. *You could have made an effort to come by more*, Will suddenly wants to point out. *You could have told me about you making the hockey team, or applying to Columbia University, that you wanted to follow me to school. You could have visited me after school when I was working at the general store. You could have chosen to study with me for AP Chemistry instead of the girl with blond hair you sit behind.* He doesn't understand the sudden peevishness tinting these thoughts, the *so many* thoughts spinning and spinning in his head.

"You should have told me," Will says again without thinking - turning heated. "You guys say you missed me, but you let me sit with the kids from Art Theory at lunch. You stopped inviting me to study sessions. You stopped coming over to my house. Why? You guys, you could have just... I wouldn't have needed to make more friends if I had you guys, and now you're all going away."

Mike blinks at him. "Not anymore if we go to Columbia. We still have a few months left."

Will throws his hands up. "Jesus, Mike, are you serious?" He blows out a big breath at Mike's confused stare. "So, what? You're just going to sacrifice everything you wanted at Virginia Tech to follow me to art school?" He stands up, and Mike shakily follows almost immediately afterwards. "Mike, what the hell?"

He stands there, half a foot taller, but somehow looks so small. "Why are you mad?" he says uncertainly, with a tone of voice that might be more appropriate for a child rather than an eighteen year old. Will grinds his teeth together, a movement of pure agitation and indignation.

"I'm not -" He stops himself and shakes his head again. "No, I am, I'm - I'm *mad*. Why would you tell me all of this? I got as busy as much as you guys just *left* me, and suddenly you want me to apply to Hawkins just so we can put our acceptance letters together to commemorate our friendship or whatever when I thought I was never gonna see you guys again and was accepting that!"

Mike opens his mouth to say something, but Will raises up his hands again. He's not entirely sure where the spark of anger has come from now, but it's there and it's growing. "What is it supposed to mean when you tell me you broke up with El?"

He doesn't know what he's doing, because he can't remember feeling particularly angry at his friends for accepting him pulling away from their tight-knit group, but looking at Mike's pathetically drooping face, with his parted pale red lips reaching for words that won't come out, his eyes lost of lambent spark and replaced with doleful confusion - suddenly ignites an anger he hasn't remembered feeling towards Mike since the first time he saw him and El kiss. Long, long, long ago. "You know I have some free time. You *all* know I have free time. Why didn't you just tell me before?"

"Because we can't!" Mike suddenly explodes. Will flinches. "It's hard trying to get you alone these days! Of course we felt hopeless." This is the first time they've had this otherwise unspoken conversation, but it hurts kind of hollowly, like they've had it several times and it's

severely worn out by now; maybe it's just because it's been pushed to the back of Will's mind. It was something that he assumed would just go by without being discussed, and now the repercussions of it happening were painful in a bitter sort of way.

"I want to tell you now. While we still have time. We still have so much time," Mike says, and his voice drops all of its attitude immediately. "Fuck," he suddenly curses. "I just have so much to tell you. I knew that I shouldn't - I shouldn't have. I'm sorry. I know that you had something you came to me about." He throws his leg across his knee, curls up his face in his hand. "It's been a long time since you've come to my house," he finishes softly. Will doesn't even know what that's supposed to mean.

He takes a deep breath, Mike's eyes fixed on him with whatever emotion he means to carry out. Will knows that doing this will hijack everything stored in Mike's near or immediate future that included him, but in a strange moment, of a rush of terror and adrenaline, he thinks there's nothing better to do than go ahead and ruin it while they're in the moment of coming down from something outrageous. At least, he thinks, it would be an argument that they would never have again.

"I came here because I wanted to tell you six months before we leave for college that I've always liked you." It's shaky and wobbly. There is no going back, no use trying to make up anything. Will wonders if the conversation would have ended more smoothly if he hadn't said anything about it at all.

Mike's face is flat and unnervingly impenetrable in comparison, so Will looks down at the carpeted floor, unable to watch. He's always hated laying down on this basement floor. It tickled his back when he rubbed against it and he got horrible burns when he sat up, so he always preferred to sit on the couch with Mike. "I've always liked you. Since when I was maybe twelve or thirteen years old. I just thought that you should have known before the year was over. I thought you should have known before I never saw you or the rest of the party again."

"But now you're following me to Columbia. So now you're going to have to be stuck with me if you have to go and you're going to be

wondering why you did it,” he spits. Mike is still looking down pointedly at the floor.

“I’m also applying for its science programs,” Mike mumbles quietly. “It rivals Virginia Tech’s. And I like New York.”

Will loses the efflux of his dramatic thought for a moment, but he lets himself keep talking to spare the even more damaging idea of leaving it unfinished. It’s a weird sort of compulsion he can’t just leave incomplete now. He needs Mike to know. “I thought that coming here before I go would help me let go of my feelings for you, even if I had to see you walking in the halls every day for the rest of the year. Now I have no idea.”

Mike still isn’t saying anything, still looking down at his shoes, and Will’s shoulders start to heave, rising and falling unsteadily. It’s been a long time since he’s been wracked with anxiety, because he’s since shut out most of those overwrought feelings that linked to bad times, but here he can’t help but remember all of the times he went through that anxiety with Mike, and thirteen year-old Mike tended to him and thirteen year-old Will fell in love with him. That’s gone now and won’t come again, and even if Will knew it was going to be gone because he came for closure, it still hurts unlike anything else.

“El told me she thought I’m being too obvious,” Mike suddenly says. “It was more like her breaking up with me.”

Will holds himself back from blowing out a big sigh again. Here they are in Mike’s basement, alone, and Will can’t help but feel that even Mike knows it’s drawing back to memories of before El by being here together and alone. But he’s talking about El. Feet away from her old blanket fort that he still had up out of whatever fondness and nostalgia. Right after Will disclosed to Mike that he loved him, he’s always loved him. At this point Will had expected more of a strike across the face or a trembling warning to leave Mike’s house rather than the painful rollback of his stupid relationship that had torn up a very confused and struggling fourteen year-old Will. *Why are we talking about El?!*

“I don’t even think I knew that I liked you so much until it was after that you were gone,” Mike admits, and then Will instantly feels

himself perking up. He doesn't have time to process or understand, but without so much as a thought he dares to meet Mike's eyes when Mike's head raises to look at him. "I liked you but I liked El too. It was a hard time. I just stayed with El because it felt normal and I knew I liked her." Mike chews on his lip. "It took me a while to realize that I liked you at all, and longer to realize that I preferred you. El seemed to know from the beginning, though." He laughs humourlessly, hollowly. "It's like you said, right? I thought it'd be easier since we didn't talk so much anymore and we were gonna graduate. It's hard." Mike steps closer, and Will catches another whiff of that stupid, stupid baby powder.

"But if we're becoming adults or whatever, then we're going to make decisions in situations like adults." He pinches the bridge of his nose, and Will stares in awe. "That's something Nancy told me once, I think. Anyways, I want to go to Columbia with you as a decision I make as an adult. I didn't think I'd be lucky enough to know that you felt the same way. I never knew if you did. I especially didn't know if you did when you stopped hanging out with us. With me."

Will shifts on his feet. Suddenly the air of the room has changed completely. This wasn't even a conversation he'd seen playing out in his mind in those days long ago when he was younger, when the only thing he thought of was Mike on repeat, holding hands with him or taking him on a date; Mike acknowledging feelings that had been equivocal that he'd had about Will - and telling this to Will; it was more than what was on his worst or best scenario list that he'd compiled driving here. In fact he didn't know if it was good or bad. This was such an uncomfortable and humiliating conversation that put Will to shame like nothing else, and he has no idea what to do about it, even though a very large and very desperate part of him wants to break into a big smile and drown in a giddy rush of happiness.

He accounts Mike taking just another step closer, and Mike doesn't put his hand to Will's chin to tip it forward and kiss him, but instead folds him into a tight hug.

Will relaxes into it almost immediately and lets Mike's hand rub across his shoulders. Two people, two adults being in love was a concept that Will had always felt very indifferent about, because he'd

always crushed on Mike as a child without the idea of growing up like this. Standing here, wrapped in his old best friend's arms, he's working on swallowing the concept of being in love with Mike as an adult. Mike being in love with him as an adult. Them together, after a prolonged series of teenage years that had apparently consisted of Mike solving the puzzle of his love interests and sexuality, while Will had spent them in painful and conflicted pining that would later be done from afar. And now that they're here, things are too vague to know... where to go from here, exactly.

But Mike seems to know. "This is something that I want to do," he says finally, extracting himself from the hug. "I wasn't going to go to Columbia just to do it, but that would definitely be a plus." He cracks a faint smile, a smile Will had hardly become familiar with over the past year being so far away.

Tentatively, but hopefully, Will sticks his hands up to Mike's shoulders, clutching at his shirt.

"Okay," Will acquiesces after a moment of soaking in the idea, reveling in it only the tiniest bit. "This is something that I've wanted for a long time." Desperately and more than anything, Will did not want a possible relationship to spiral into the trope of childhood sweethearts breaking up once they go to college and everything ends in heartbreak and tears, and he wanted Mike to know that. He felt like his heart had been broken one too many times already, but he wasn't sure why.

"I wish that I knew sooner," Mike says, and Will thinks he might melt into mush right there. His heartbeat steadied, Will exchanges a meaningful look with the long-lost friend he had now come to retrieve and make his own again that read that this was something they had both wanted now and were ready to do it together. The yellow lights of lamps around them emit a comfortable glow that lands everywhere.

Mike's soft, rich eyes delve into Will's, and then a strange feeling like relief and that giddiness Will had tried so hard to repress comes up and washes over them when they lean toward each other. Will's heart is speeding, soaring past him, and Mike murmurs something soft like "this is fast" over his lips, and Will finds himself making a noise of

agreement but still reaches up to brush his mouth over Mike's anyway.

It's all surprisingly gentle and light that leaves a certain warmth before they pull away the first time; then quicker and more eager they return to each other again, gripping each other's shirts with a feverish but fulfilled release that makes Will's stomach churn with something wonderful.

The excited and incredulous idea of how Will has waited *so long* for this rushes through his mind when they finally stop, taking in each other's contented faces, Will memorizing every shape that forms together to make Mike's small nose and full lips. It feels like he's been missing out on something all this time, but it also feels like... it's very right. Because he's been waiting so long that the satisfaction is completely irredeemable, the physical exemption of everything he'd been so hopelessly feeling.

He can go to New York with Mike, he realizes - because right now he feels like he could go anywhere with him, nestled against his shoulder and tucking his chin in his neck. Or he could stay like this forever.

"Let's go to Columbia," Will says softly, evacuating all the scandalized and hurt perceptions of Mike's obviously stupid proposals from just a couple of moments ago. "Now that you told me, if you want to come with me... then let's go." He skims his thumb over Mike's hand, placed firm on his shoulder. "As long as it's what you want to do." He offers him a shy smile, like everything's falling into place here with him. Him and Mike. Together. That was what they were going to do, weren't they?

Mike nods at him and leans in to seal off another kiss, but Will lets out a soft puff of warm air over Mike's chin and stops him.

He wants to ask him if he means this, even though Mike's promised him that he means this, willing to follow him all the way to New York for this. *This is something that I want to do. I wasn't going to go to Columbia just to do it, but that would definitely be a plus.* He wants to voice his questions, but nothing comes out. He frowns.

"Will," Mike says patiently. "I love you." And suddenly Will's heart is set on fire once more, ramming wild in his chest, and he lets Mike pull him back in with no more hesitation. They kiss slower and softer, then make their way to the couch so they don't have to sit on the carpeted floor.

They smile at each other, and Mike tells him about the ridiculously stupid but adept and strong-hearted guys on his hockey team and how Will should come to his next game on Friday at 6pm - and Will promises to find Mike next lunch and show the party the pictures he's taken himself and compiled for the yearbook, and he promises to take some at Mike's game and make sure he chooses the portrait Mike looks the best in. They talk in soft tones about the courses at Columbia, and their application essays. Will mentions how he'll finally be close to Jonathan now that he's there, and eventually says, "You know, I think Jonathan knew that I liked you. I think Nancy too."

Mike's expression turns amused. "Let them know what we're doing now, then. When you go to see him, I'll come with you. And then when I go to see Nancy, I'll take you with me."

Will *laughs*. They are nervous, bumbling seniors, linked together by the arm and sprawled out on a couch in the basement of a house that's smack in the middle of Nowhere, Indiana. After a little over a year of brief, edgy glances in the halls and short, terse "*hi*"s and "*bye*"s. Excitable and emotional, tentative with their feelings with each other, but full of ideas and dreams, and they want to go out together. They want to go out, big and bold away from home *together*. Will wants to go to Columbia and Mike wants to go with him, a crazily sudden idea that Will thinks must be impulsive, but...

But Mike wants to go *with* him. Will shallowly recalls the proposal of a memorialization of him and all his middle school friends, portrayed through a selection of their college acceptance letters to Hawkins of Indiana. How strange was the shift of being blissfully free kids to awkward and distanced teenagers to being this. Perhaps it was so little time that it had happened in, but it was also... an eternity. And the eternity would stretch on.

Will doesn't know very much yet, but he knows enough to

understand he doesn't want to let go of it. He wants the eternity to stretch on far beyond Hawkins and far beyond college. Because Mike wants to go with him. His oblivious, ungainly, clumsy childhood crush, that took years to figure out something Will had found so simple. Will nestles his head in Mike's side as they lay there like two absolute idiots. They start from here in Mike's house, relearning each other. They'll go.

And they'll grow. They'll start with college and they'll hope it's Columbia for Will's art and Mike's science. But for now, they watch the shadows and folds of El's old blanket fort in the corner of the room, Will's old drawings for D&D campaigns taped on the walls around them - still up there, after all this time.

And they look at each other. And they are already going, already moving towards New York. Together.